

# ***I. INTRODUCTION***

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## ***AUTHORITY***

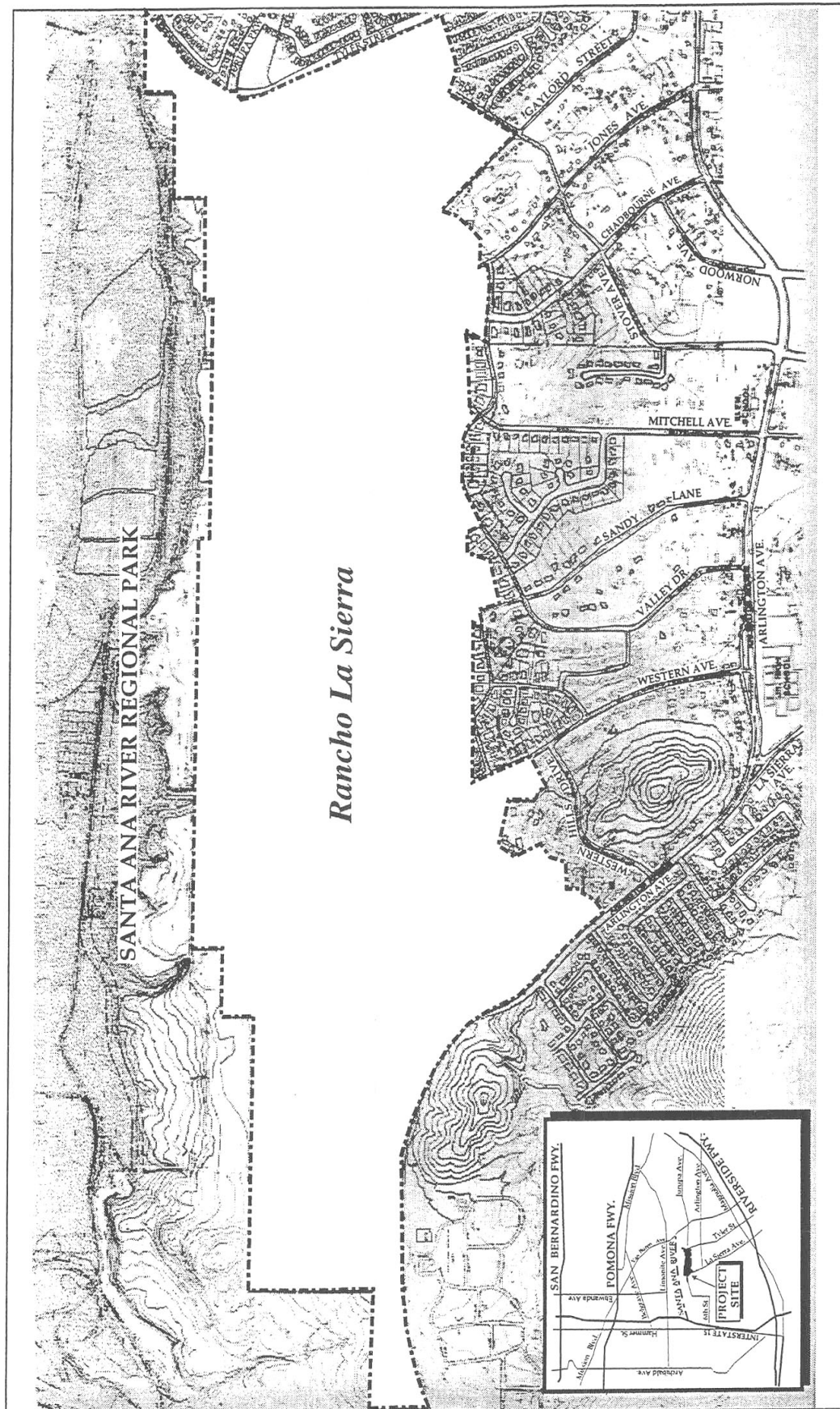
A specific plan is a tool for the systematic implementation of the City's General Plan within a defined geographic area. It also allows for the unique and special characteristics of the defined area to be recognized and specifically addressed in the planning and development process. California Government Code Sections 65450 and 65451 authorize local governmental agencies to prepare specific plans, and set forth the requirements with respect to form and content. Voter initiative Measure C approved in 1987 required the City of Riverside to prepare a specific plan for the properties known as Rancho La Sierra, and further established planning objectives for the specific plan. These objectives were based on the site's unique characteristics related to its agricultural history, proximity to the Santa Ana River, open space character, and visual prominence. The Rancho La Sierra Specific Plan (Plan) has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of state law and Measure C.

## ***DESCRIPTION OF THE SPECIFIC PLAN AREA***

The Rancho La Sierra Specific Plan area encompasses approximately 755 acres of rolling, mostly vacant land situated at the northwestern edge of the City of Riverside (see Figure 1). The northern boundary of the plan area is generally formed by the Santa Ana River and the Santa Ana River Regional Park managed by the County of Riverside. To the east, the site is bordered by Tyler Street and single-family residential development. The area to the south is characterized by a mix of newer and older homes on lots of varying size, some with an equestrian character. Undeveloped land in the City of Norco and County of Riverside borders the plan area on the west. As shown on Figure 2, lands within the plan area are privately owned, with the exception of approximately 41.7 acres owned by the County of Riverside.

## ***PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THE PLAN***

The Rancho La Sierra Specific Plan is intended to comply with the objectives of Measure C by facilitating a high quality development accommodating a variety of uses while still maintaining the property's open space character and protecting the sensitive Santa Ana River corridor. By combining active recreation (golf), passive open space and limited residential clusters, the Plan not only complies with the objectives of Measure C but also provides opportunities for economic return in the form of golf and residential development with northerly views of natural open space and the golf course. Specific regulations are established within the Plan to govern all facets of future development, including the types, intensities and locations of future land uses, development standards, basic infrastructure requirements, and implementation measures.

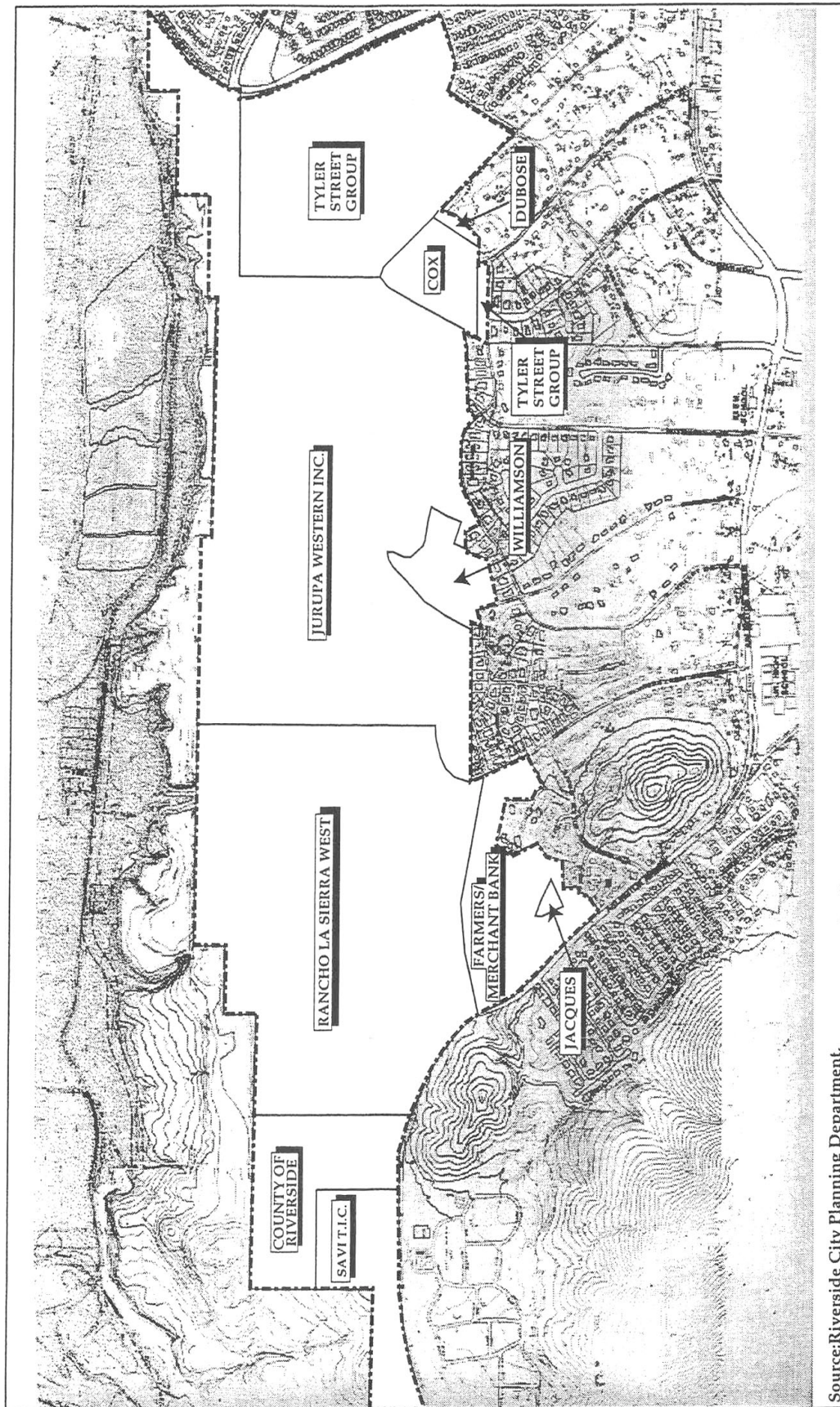


*Rancho La Sierra*



# PROJECT LOCATION





Source: Riverside City Planning Department.



**LAND OWNERSHIP**

**FIGURE 2**

Not to Scale

The Plan reflects an extensive public planning and environmental review process as described below, involving community and landowner input, as well as numerous public hearings before the City's Environmental Protection Commission, Planning Commission, City Council Land Use Committee, and full City Council.

## ***LAND USE PLAN SUMMARY***

The Rancho La Sierra Specific Plan features a variety of community facilities and open space uses, including up to forty-five holes of golf open to the public interspersed throughout the site on approximately 383 acres. Undeveloped open space encompassing major hilltops, drainages, and a wildlife corridor is another important feature, comprising 170 acres. Other proposed facilities include public trails, a 5.5 acre equestrian center, a community park site, and a 10 acre elementary school site. Nestled within the site are clusters of single family residences, with lots averaging 1 acre in size, with one-half acre lots permitted at selected locations. No more than 162 residential units are allowed within the Plan area. A limited public street system is envisioned to access planned community facilities, with a private street system to accommodate residential development. Agricultural opportunities are provided at the westerly end of the site, and wetland and marsh opportunities are incorporated within the golf course layout. The land use plan is illustrated in Figure 3.

## ***SPECIFIC PLAN HISTORY***

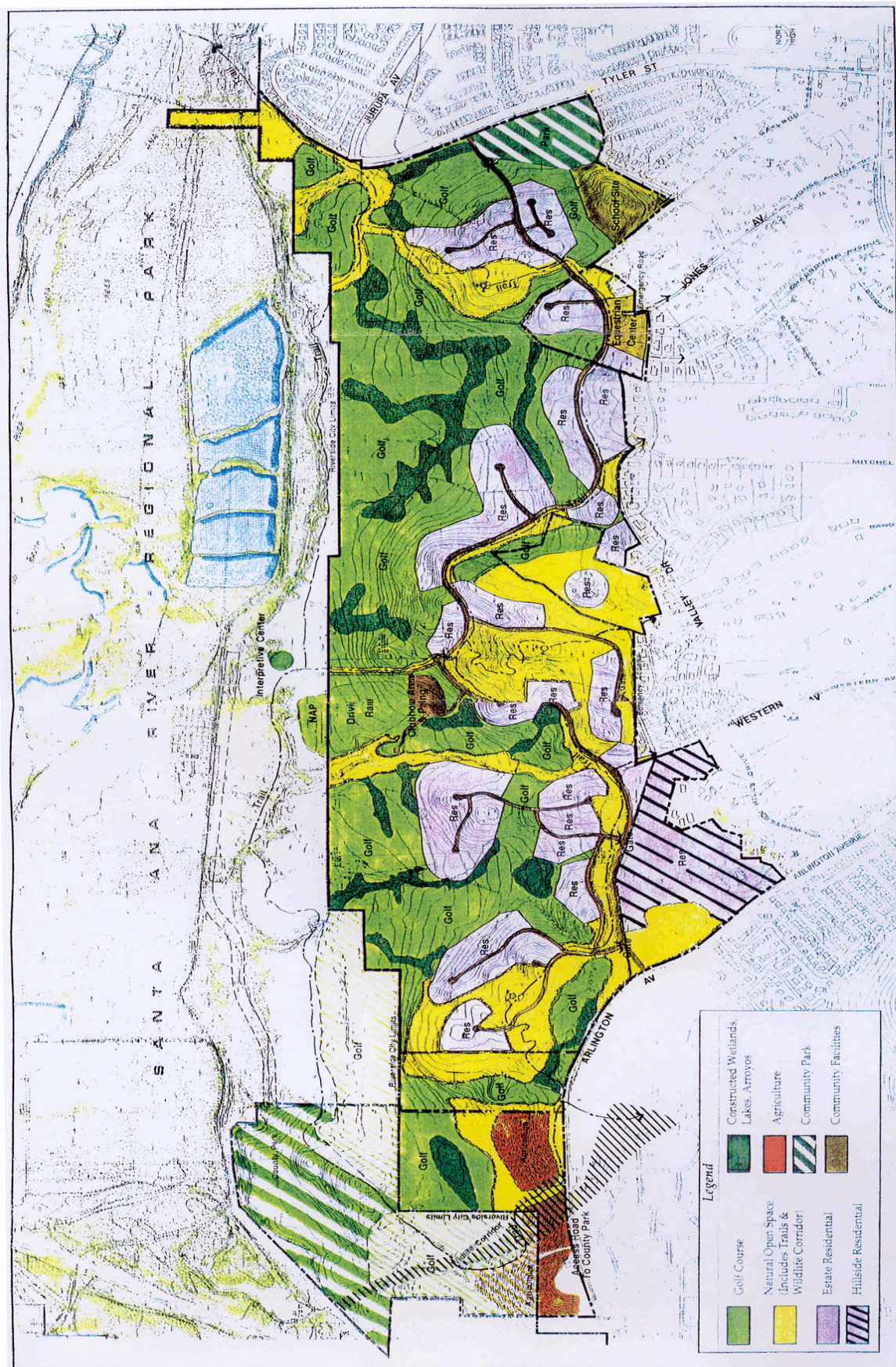
### ***Measures R and C***

A majority of Rancho La Sierra property has long been zoned Residential Agricultural. Voter initiative Measure R was approved in 1979, requiring minimum 5-acre lots on the Residential Agricultural-zoned portion of the site. In addition, passage of Measure R resulted in the application of the Residential Conservation (RC) Zone to the approximately 45 acre parcel designated Hillside Residential under this Plan.

Measure C was approved via the citizen initiative process in November, 1987. Its purpose is reflected in its title: "Citizens' Rights Initiative to Reduce Costly Urban Sprawl, to Reduce Traffic Congestion, to Minimize Utility Rate Increases and to Facilitate Preservation of Riverside's Citrus and Agricultural Lands, its Scenic Hills, Ridgelines, Arroyos and Wildlife Areas." Section 5 of Measure C requires the City to prepare a specific plan for the Rancho La Sierra area that satisfies the following criteria:

- ! New housing units shall be clustered to protect the river bottom wildlife refuge, the agricultural land along the river bluffs and the open space character of the area;







- ! The total number of housing units permitted shall be no more than as permitted under the existing zoning, but requiring that the housing areas be developed consistent with the standards and criteria of the RC "Residential Conservation" Zone;
- ! The wildlife refuge, agricultural land and open space character of the river area shall all be preserved;
- ! Any future roads and/or utility service shall be located so as to protect the wildlife refuge, agricultural land, and open space character of the area;
- ! Public trail access along the river corridor compatible with protection of the wildlife refuge shall be maintained and provided for hiking, bicycling and equestrian uses.

### ***Specific Plan Preparation***

In mid-1991, the City of Riverside initiated a comprehensive planning process to prepare the Rancho La Sierra Specific Plan. Planning efforts focused on the policies of Measure C and the City's General Plan, as well as development objectives expressed by the participating property owners. To facilitate the planning process, the City Council appointed a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) representing landowner, neighborhood, and environmental interests. The CAC reviewed a series of planning studies that identified the site's environmental constraints, community context, landowner objectives, infrastructure, and policy issues for consideration in preparing the Plan.

Public participation in this planning process was not limited to the CAC. A questionnaire was mailed to local residents requesting their input in defining a vision for the future of Rancho La Sierra. In addition, public workshops were also held in the La Sierra community to discuss the process and further solicit public comment.

Building upon Measure C's objectives and the values and goals identified by the CAC and the community at large, four alternative land use concept plans (concept plans) were developed for further evaluation in an environmental impact report. Each concept plan was evaluated at four different densities, ranging from one unit per acre to one unit per five acres. These concept plans were evaluated in a thorough public review process, including extensive written comments on the environmental impact report and numerous hearings before the City's Environmental Protection Commission, Planning Commission, City Council Land Use Committee, and City Council.

On April 26, 1994, the City Council selected the Championship Golf Concept Plan as the basis for preparation of the Rancho La Sierra Specific Plan, and further approved criteria to be incorporated into the final specific plan. These additional criteria include the following:

### *Golf Course Design Criteria*

- a. The golf course shall include 36 holes with driving range. The driving range will be designed without night lighting and in such a way as to minimize the need for large scale fencing and to minimize resultant visual impacts.
- b. The clubhouse and related facilities shall be designed to serve the needs of "serious golfers" and not include incidental amenities such as swimming pool and tennis court, or hold non-golf-related banquets and events.
- c. The clubhouse shall be centrally located as shown on the conceptual plan.
- d. A golf hole routing between the westerly knoll and Arlington Avenue shall be utilized so as to be visible from Arlington Avenue.
- e. A planting and landscape plan shall be prepared to enhance the biological habitat and wildlife corridor values of the golf course.
- f. A master drainage plan shall be prepared emphasizing the on-site detention and treatment of golf course runoff for fertilizers and pesticides prior to its discharge into the Santa Ana River.
- g. The golf course design shall minimize turfed areas and grading and emphasize retention of natural topographic features.

### *Residential Design Criteria*

- a. Locate homes primarily near the base of existing slopes and knolls on the property as shown on the conceptual plan.
- b. Avoid "walling in" golf links with homes on both sides.
- c. Provide a private street system to serve residential clusters.
- d. Access to the site from the neighborhood to the south should be limited to emergency vehicles unless otherwise necessary.
- e. Only limited residential development within the central knoll shall be permitted.
- f. Provide necessary infrastructure, with the goal of minimizing costs while providing for ongoing maintenance needs.
- g. Street improvements shall be consistent with the high quality rural lifestyle of the project.

- h. Minimize grading.
- i. Lot size shall average 1 du/acre (net), with some lots as small as .5 acre (net) permitted at selected locations. RC-zoned properties shall average 1 du/2 acres (net). In the RC zoned area, a density bonus up to 25 percent may be permitted if clustering is proposed, consistent with the criteria contained in Section 19.65.050 of the Municipal Code.

### ***CONSISTENCY OF PLAN WITH THE CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF COURSE CONCEPT PLAN***

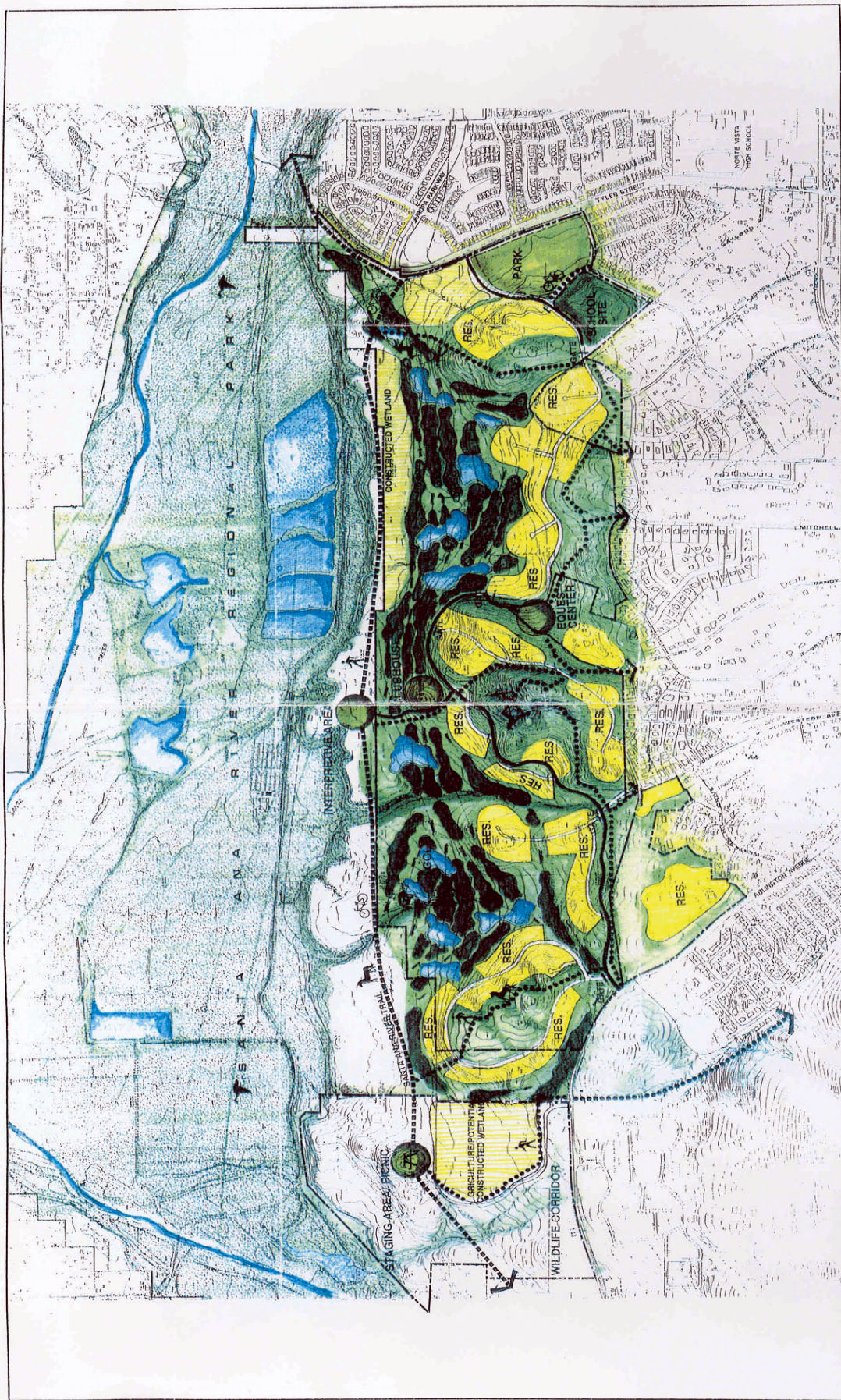
In preparing the Rancho La Sierra Specific Plan based upon the approved Championship Golf Concept Plan (concept plan), several modifications to the concept plan are proposed. The Championship Golf Concept Plan is attached as Figure 4 for comparison. The proposed revisions are consistent with the criteria (with the exception of the number of holes proposed) approved by the City Council, and do not result in significant alterations from the concept plan.

One proposed alteration is that the developer has requested authorization to construct up to 45 holes of golf, in contrast to 36 holes as approved by the City Council under the Championship Golf Concept Plan. The developers indicate this expansion is important to accommodate additional golfers, sustain long term interest and encourage repeat play, thereby enhancing the economic viability of the complex and its stature as a recreational destination. The acreage devoted to golf under the Plan increases from approximately 330 to 383 acres (including lakes/marshes/wetlands). This additional acreage available for golf results primarily from refining the agriculture/constructed wetland uses as originally shown in the concept plan. In addition, in order to accommodate the golf course layout, it may be necessary to adjust property line boundaries between individual properties within the Plan area.

Specifically, the provision of 105 acres for constructed wetland/agriculture in three major blocks under the concept plan was intended to accommodate a strategy to enhance the City's ability to treat and reuse wastewater using natural denitrification techniques. The City has indefinitely postponed a decision on this treatment approach. These land blocks, given their location and configuration, do not lend themselves to productive long-term agricultural uses. The agricultural and wetland uses have been separately defined under the Plan, which now proposes that 65.5 acres of constructed wetlands/marsh/lakes be incorporated into the golf course and along multi-purpose trail corridors, and that 26.5 acres be permanently reserved at the westerly end of the Plan area for agricultural uses, recognizing the agricultural provisions of Measure C and providing a distinctive gateway into the City. The total acreage devoted to wetlands and agricultural uses under the Plan is approximately 92 acres.

In addition, a 4 acre equestrian center was approved under the concept plan, located near the Williamson property in the center of the site. Under the Plan, this facility has been relocated to a site near the intersection of Jones Avenue and Valley Drive and expanded to 5.5 acres in size. This new location is more accessible to the existing residential neighborhood to the south





CHAMPIONSHIP GOLF COURSE CONCEPT PLAN



which the facility is intended to serve. While the total acreage devoted to trails and scenic open space within the Plan is the same as that proposed under the concept plan, revision to the golf course layout and reconfiguration of areas reserved for future residential use have resulted in the realignment of several trail segments and reconfiguration of some open space areas. Notable changes include the following:

- ! The westerly linkage to the Santa Ana River Trail will be provided via a new alignment that traverses the westerly knoll, then veers westerly and parallels Arlington Avenue.
- ! Residential development on the westerly hill has been reconfigured. Whereas the concept plan proposed residential development ringing the hill, the Plan concentrates residential development in a larger pocket on the east side, and in a smaller area to the north. This provides for a more visually expansive open space area, as the natural open space transitions directly to the golf course.
- ! The open space area northerly of Valley Drive has been reduced through the realignment of the private access road to the south, and the introduction of residential clusters in the less steep sections of this former open space area. This in turn breaks up the larger, continuous residential component originally proposed between the easterly and center hills.

In addition to the above-referenced changes to the residential development areas, the residential area on the easterly side of the east hill has been enlarged and moved up onto the back of the knoll to preserve rock outcrops. Adjustments to the new knoll top development may be necessary to comply with the Plan objectives related to avoiding skyline development.

## ***RELATIONSHIP OF THE PLAN TO THE GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING ORDINANCE***

The City of Riverside General Plan prescribes land use policies intended to achieve the desired community character and quality of life as part of the City's long range planning program. The General Plan Land Use Diagram designates approximately 95 percent of Rancho La Sierra for Agricultural-Residential land uses, permitting residential development at a density of one dwelling unit per five acres. The remaining land area at the southwesterly Plan boundary along Arlington Avenue is designated as Hillside Residential, permitting the development of single-family homes at an average density of one dwelling unit per two acres. This Plan is consistent with the General Plan Land Use Diagram.

The Streets and Highways Diagram of the General Plan Transportation Element indicates the extension of Jurupa Avenue across the site as a 2-lane special boulevard connecting to Arlington Avenue, and the northerly extensions of Sandy Lane and Jones Avenue into the Plan area. The Plan does not propose these circulation elements, reflecting a desire expressed in the planning process on the part of the community and the City Council to minimize traffic across the site, and impacts on neighborhoods to the

south. In adopting this Plan, the Streets and Highways Diagram of the General Plan Transportation Element is hereby amended to delete the westerly extension of Jurupa Avenue and the northerly extensions of Sandy Lane and Jones Avenue.

The City of Riverside will administer the Plan as an "overlay" to the existing Residential Agricultural (RA-5) and Residential Conservation (RC) zoning classifications resulting from the passage of Measure R that currently govern development of the Plan area (see Figure 5 for existing zoning). This Plan defines development standards that shall be applied to future individual developments within the plan area. The standards set forth herein supersede the requirements found in the City of Riverside Municipal Code. In those categories where the Plan does not establish or define standards, the standards of the underlying zoning as set forth in the City of Riverside Municipal Code shall apply. This Plan may further specify development regulations that are not addressed in the Municipal Code.

### ***MEASURE C CONSISTENCY***

As discussed previously, Measure C established a number of planning criteria to be achieved under the Rancho La Sierra Specific Plan. The Plan as presented in this document is consistent with the Measure C criteria. It authorizes the permitted number of residential units, and provides for the clustered development of these units pursuant to Residential Conservation (RC) Zone standards. The design further provides low intensity uses (minimizing residential development and roadways) along the sensitive Santa Ana River corridor, thereby preserving the agricultural, wildlife, and open space character of the river basin. Public trail access is also accommodated, as required by Measure C.

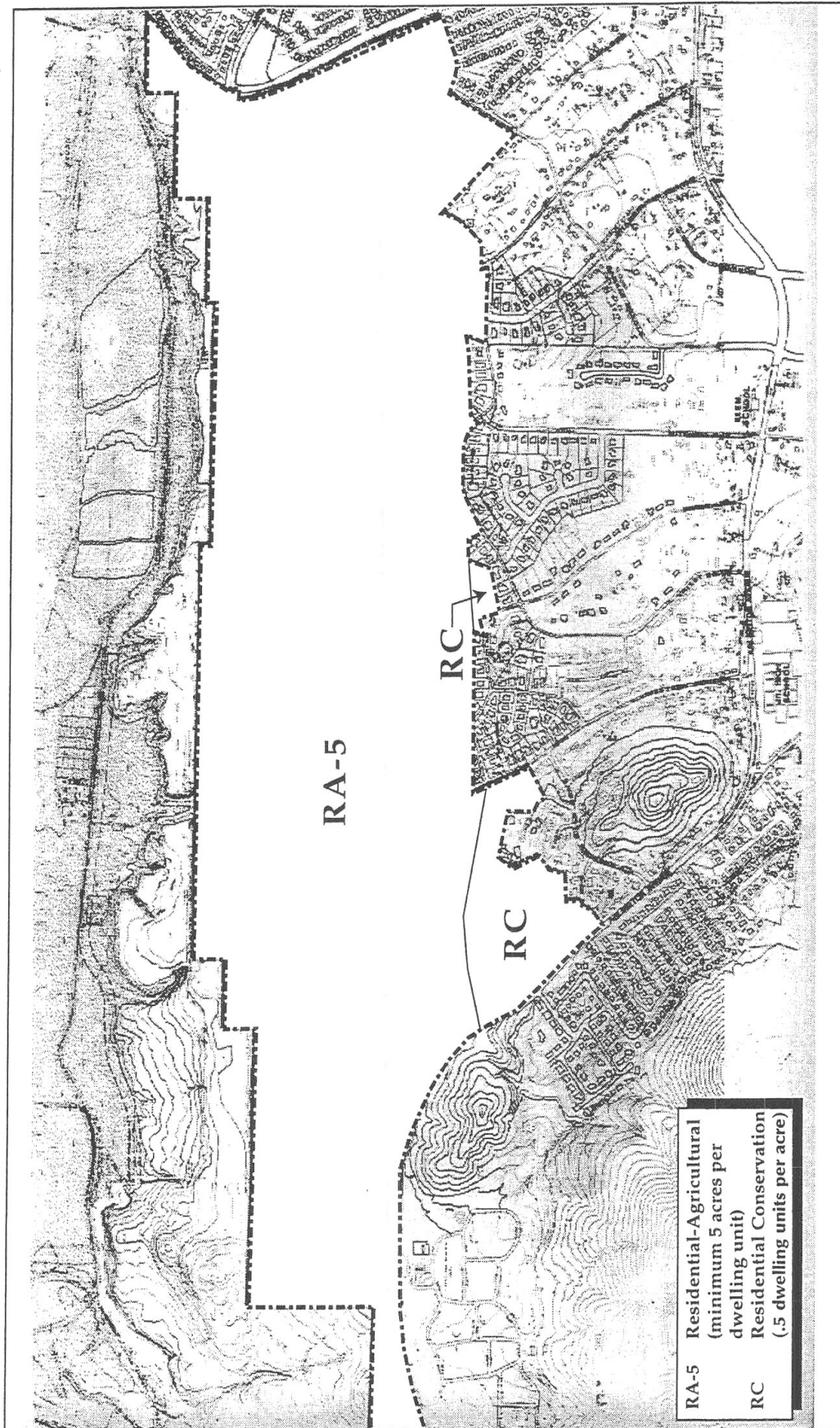
### ***RELATIONSHIP OF THE PLAN TO OTHER RELEVANT PLANNING PROGRAMS***

Several other planning programs have been adopted by other public agencies that influence planned land uses within the Rancho La Sierra Specific Plan. The Plan is intended to complement and avoid conflicts with those other planning programs, as discussed below:

#### ***Hidden Valley Wildlife Area Management Plan***

This plan is administered by the Riverside County Open Space and Parks District for the protection and use of the Hidden Valley Wildlife Refuge located in the adjacent portion of the Santa Ana River basin. The Rancho La Sierra Specific Plan area adjoins but does not include any of the wildlife refuge. The objectives of the management plan as they pertain to protecting the wildlife resource values of the River are reflected in the stated objectives and design of the Rancho La Sierra Specific Plan.





## ***Santa Ana River Trails Master Plan***

This multi-jurisdictional plan to provide a regional multi-use trail along the Santa Ana River from the Pacific Ocean to the San Bernardino National Forest includes a planned segment near the northerly boundary of the project site. The Plan proposes construction of that segment of the trail traversing the northeasterly portion of the Plan area. Other trails proposed in the Plan provide linkages to the Santa Ana River trail system.

## ***Riverside Municipal Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plan***

Approximately 170 acres in the eastern edge of the Plan area lie within the "Airport Influence Area" of the Riverside Municipal Airport, located 1.5 miles east of the planning area. This "influence" area is affected by aircraft related noise and flight path considerations identified in the Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) which affect development density and building height. The CLUP is currently in draft form pending adoption. Nonetheless, the Rancho La Sierra Specific Plan is intended to be consistent with its objectives to the maximum extent feasible, and the uses proposed within the influence area are consistent with the provisions of the draft CLUP.

## ***FUTURE DEVELOPMENT***

All future site-specific development proposals, such as subdivisions, conditional use permits, public works or community facilities projects, development agreements or other proposals which could affect the use of land within the planning area are required to be consistent with the Plan. A specific finding to that effect must be made by the appropriate City decision making body before such proposals may be approved.

## ***STREAMLINED ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW***

As part of the concept plan selection process, an environmental impact report (EIR) was prepared, evaluating the various concept plans then under consideration. The EIR was certified on April 26, 1994, prior to City Council selection of the Championship Golf Course Concept Plan. Pursuant to Section 21083.3 of the Public Resources Code, future projects which are consistent with the specific plan are eligible for streamlined review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Such projects, if not exempt from CEQA, may be reviewed through an Initial Study to determine whether they involve unique site-specific circumstances and/or environmental effects not addressed in the EIR for the Rancho La Sierra concept plan selection. If the Initial Study identifies such unique circumstances or effects, additional documentation need only evaluate those areas. In all cases, however, the mitigation measures included in the concept plan selection Final EIR that are relevant to the site-specific project in question must be imposed on that project.

## ***SEVERABILITY***

This Specific Plan is hereby declared to be severable. If any part, sentence, paragraph, section or clause is adjudged unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder of this specific plan shall not be affected. If any part, sentence, paragraph, section or clause of this specific plan, or its application to any person or entity is adjudged unconstitutional or invalid, such unconstitutionality or invalidity shall affect only such part, sentence, paragraph, section or clause of this resolution, or such person or entity; and shall not affect or impair any of the remaining provisions, parts, sentences, paragraphs, sections or clauses of this plan, or its application to other persons or entities.